Index to Minutes of Meeting
The Commission of Fine Arts
5 April 1956

American Battle Monuments Commission
Design for memorial in American Military Cemetery, Honolulu, Hawaii 2

East Coast Memorial, New York City; design for 2

Columbia College
Girl's Dormitory and Physical Education Bldg. 4

Decoration of Public Buildings
Draft legislation for fund 3

Federal Buildings in Washington
Report by General Services Administration for a study for 3

Freer Gallery of Art
Acquisitions by purchase 3

Legislation, Draft of
For a fund for the decoration of public buildings 3

Light Standards, Street
Disapproval of design 2

National Association of Life Underwriters
Approval of design for building 4

Parking facilities for Postmaster General
In hemicycle on 12th Street, N. W. 3

Potomac River Crossing at Constitution Avenue
HR 10209/84th Congress - proposing a tunnel 1

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
Visit to site to consider proposed additional crypts 4

Minutes of Meeting of
The Commission of Fine Arts
5 April 1956

The Commission met pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., with David E. Finley, Chairman, presiding.

Present were: David E. Finley, Chairman
Douglas W. Orr, Vice Chairman
Felix de Weldon
William G. Perry
Mrs. Emily Muir

L.R. Wilson, Secretary

Minutes of previous meetings

The Chairman stated that the minutes for the previous meetings were being prepared and would be distributed when ready. The Secretary reported that he was editing the text of the transcript so that, although the completion of the minutes was delayed, a record of each meeting was being preserved for completion as soon as possible.

Appropriations for 1957

The Chairman reported that committees of both houses of Congress had approved the Commission's request for $31,000 for fiscal year 1957.

Dates of next meeting

The dates of May 9 and 10 were fixed for the next meeting of the Commission.

Department of the Interior, National Park Service
National Capital Parks

Potomac River Crossing at Constitution Avenue

The members of the Commission reviewed, with Mr. Harry Thompson, Associate Superintendent of National Capital Parks, the current status of plans for a crossing at Constitution Avenue. Mr. Thompson called attention to a bill introduced by Congressman Broyhill, providing for a tunnel to be constructed in the vicinity of Constitution Avenue. The members, after long discussion, agreed that, if the crossing was to be made by a bridge in this area, they would prefer a change of site as recommended in H.R. 7472, which would provide for a crossing at the southern tip of the Theodore Roosevelt Island, but they much preferred a tunnel to a bridge. Anticipating a request to appear before a Congressional committee holding hearings on H.R. 10209, introduced by Congressman Broyhill, proposing a four-lane tunnel instead of the bridge, it was agreed that a statement would be drafted stating that the members of the Commission would prefer to see no traffic artery in this area; but if there must be one, the Commission would prefer a tunnel, and if this is not

possible, then a bridge crossing the lower end of Roosevelt Island Exhibit A.

District of Columbia Government
Department of Highways and Traffic

Street Light standards for the District of Columbia

The Chairman read a letter which had been written to Mr. Robertson, Director of the Department of Highways and Traffic, following the inspection of proposed light standards after the meeting of the Commission on February 16, 1956. The Secretary advised the members that the newspapers carried an announcement that the District Highway Department was going to proceed with the plan for replacing street lights and listing the locations of the new light standards. It was agreed after discussion that there seemed to be some misunderstanding on the part of the District Highway Department, and the Chairman was directed to write a letter to General Lane stating that the Commission could not approve the proposed light standards for the monumental Area. Exhibit B.

American Battle Monuments Commission

a. American Military Cemetery, Honolulu, Hawaii

Mr. John Harbeson, consulting architect for the American Battle Monuments Commission, presented preliminary drawings for the memorial to be erected in the American Military Cemetery, which has been laid out on Punchbowl Crater, an extinct volcano near the city of Honolulu. The plan, which was semicircular, featured a central pylon rising over a small chapel, flanked on either side by walls where maps of battle areas would be depicted. Descending from the memorial court in front of the chapel there would be steps. On each side of the steps, at regular intervals, would be planned garden courts, and beyond them, stone walls where the names of all those who lost their lives in World War II and Korea would be inscribed. The members approved the preliminary drawings and plans in general, and suggested that further serious study be given to the form of the central pylon and all its sculptural aspects. It was also recommended in this connection, that a sculptor be selected for tne memorial wall before the plans were too far advanced. Mr. Harbeson said that arrangements were being made to do so.

b. East Coast Memorial - New York City

Mr. Harbeson also presented preliminary drawings of the East Coast Memorial which would be located in Battery Park. The plans showed a central pylon, on which there would be appropriate inscriptions and some commemorative sculpture, flanked by four vertical slabs on each side, where the names of those who lost their lives inthe Atlantic waters near the shores of America would be inscribed. The members thought the plans to be somewhat uninspired, and recommended that a sculptor be selected soon; and stressed that he, with the architect, be given a free hand without limitations as to whether the sculpture should be a free standing figure or a bas relief. The members expressed a desire to see further drawings at the next meeting of the Commission.

Smithsonian Institution
Freer Gallery of Art

Acquisitions by purchase

In accordance with the usual custom, the Commission visited the Freer Gallery of Art, where the Director displayed a number of works of art proposed for purchase. The Commission was pleased to inspect the objects and approved them for purchase. Exhibit C.

General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service

a. Program for Federal Buildings in Washington and vicinity.

Mr. Fred S. Poorman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Buildings Service, explained the General Services Administration's program for Federal buildings in Washington and vicinity. He read from a report setting forth a plan for meeting major immediate requirements of executive branches of the government for permanent buildings in Washington and surrounding area. The study was made at the request of the Chairman of the subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds of the House Committee on Public Works on July 8, 1955. The plan is designed to accomplish the demolition of the temporary office buildings erected during World War I and II. The members hoped that the schedule which Mr. Poorman outlined would be carried out on schedule, especially the razing of the temporary buildings, and the construction of the new office buildings.

The members also expressed definite views that the General Services Administration warehouse in southeast Washington should be removed, and that the railroad tracks should be put underground to assure the success of plans for the redevelopment of the Southwest. Exhibit D.

b. Draft Legislation for Decoration of Public Buildings

Mr. L.L.Hunter conferred with the Commission regarding the draft of legislation to provide funds for the decoration of public buildings. Two methods for obtaining the necessary funds were discussed; 1) to ask Congress to set up a sum that the Administrator of General Services could be authorized to spend up to not exceeding a given percentage of the cost for art decoration in the building, including sculpture; 2) that the legislation specify that each appropriation would carry with it a percentage of the total cost to cover the art work. It was generally agreed that the first suggestion was the better one and Mr. Hunter was asked to confer further with Mr. Wilson and members of his own legal staff in an effort to prepare a draft bill which could be considered at the next meeting of the Commission.

c. Parking facilities for the Postmaster General

Mr. Hunter discussed with the members the proposal of the Postmaster General to make a driveway around the hemicycle on Twelfth Street and providing a small number of additional parking spaces along

the driveway; also to remove the grass from the Exedra on 13th Street facing the Great Plaza to make additional parking spaces for 41 cars. The members considered these changes would be a serious mistake and asked Mr. Hunter to give the matter further study.

Columbia College-Girl's Dormitory and Physical Education Building

The members reviewed the plans and drawings for the Girl's Dormitory and Physical Education Building at Columbia College. The plans were approved as presented. Exhibit E.

National Association of Life Underwriters

Mr. Sidney Luckman, architect, of Periera & Luckman, architects, presented revised drawings for the headquarters building of the National Association of Life Underwriters proposed to be erected at 23rd and C Streets, northwest. The members were satisfied that the recommendations for changes made by the members of the Commission had been carried out, and the design was approved. They were still disturbed, however, about the placement of the building with respect to the new State Department.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier-additions to

The meeting recessed at 4:45 o'clock to go to Arlington National Cemetery to consider the proposed additions to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The Commission will reconvene on Friday morning, April 6, at 9:00 o'clock.

L. R. Wilson,
Secretary

STATEMENT OF DAVID E. FINLEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS, BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Chairman, I am glad to have the opportunity to appear here today on behalf of the Commission of Fine Arts and to give you our views with reference to the bridge which it is proposed to build across the Potomac River near the end of Constitution Avenue.

I would like to say in the beginning that, if a bridge is to be built in this area, we greatly prefer the more northerly location across Theodore Roosevelt Island as proposed in H. R. 7472, rather than the location authorized in Public Law 704. We hope that, if there must be a bridge in this area, the Congress will authorize the change of site permitted by H. R. 7472. I would also like to emphasize that the Commission would much prefer a tunnel ~~rather than~~ to a bridge, as provided in H.R. 10209. A tunnel would eliminate the principal objections which the Commission of Fine Arts would have to a Potomac bridge crossing at this point.

In reviewing the testimony which has been given during the course of the hearings on this bridge and tunnel legislation, I have been impressed with the fact that very few witnesses have emphasized the importance of preserving this landscape which adds so much to the beauty of the city of Washington.

Copy to Mr. H. J. Thompson NCP 17 June 53

Exhibit A

Even more important, perhaps, is this landscape provides the setting for four of our great memorials: the one to Abraham Lincoln, The Marine Memorial, The Memorial Bridge, and Theodore Roosevelt Island. A bridge at this point with its connections on both sides of the river, will make these memorials the center of a swirling traffic vortex that will disasterously affect the appearance of the entire area. The memorials themselves may remain, but the beauty of their setting will largely disappear. We should consider very carefully whether we have a right to do this merely to gain some temporary alleviation of traffic problems, particularly when some other solution can be found if there is the will to do so.

It has been repeatedly stated that engineering surveys have shown that practical considerations demand a traffic artery crossing the Potomac at Constitution Avenue. But little or no consideration seems to have been given to the question as to whether the traffic requirements constitute the paramount factor that should be considered, regardless of any damage to the appearance to the city that might result. The Commission of Fine Arts believe that there are many valid arguments why a crossing should not be located in the neighborhood of Constitution Avenue. We also believe that, if eventually it is found that traffic requirements necessitate another crossing at this point, then this should be the last of a series of river crossings to be built, not the first,

as proposed in this bill.

The Commission is well aware that a landscape is not necessarily harmed by the addition of a handsome bridge. In fact, some landscapes can be greatly improved by the addition of a well designed bridge, as is true of Memorial Bridge, which adds to, rather than detracts from, the beauty of the setting in which it is placed. There are other points along the river where a bridge could be built without harming the landscape but this is not true of the area between the Key Bridge and the Memorial Bridge. In this particular location we have, by a combination of natural elements and careful design, a civic landscape which approaches perfection in its relation of land, water, and air elements to the city and to the great national monuments which are placed in this area. I know of no civic landscape in any foreign capital or any other American city that surpasses in beauty the one which we have here in Washington. And yet, it is proposed, at the insistance of highway engineers, to sacrifice this landscape to traffic considerations that might well be met in other ways. The Commission of Fine Arts believes that it is its duty to point out once again the gravity of what it considers to be a shortsighted attitude in insisting upon a bridge at this location.

The position of the Commission of Fine Arts has been consistent in this matter. We have not favored previous

plans to build bridges in this area. We are opposed to the location of the bridge authorized in P. L. 704 as enacted in 1954. But the fact that we are opposed to the building of a bridge in this area did not prevent us from cooperating since that time with the agencies involved in trying to get the best possible design for a bridge and its approaches, as authorized in this bill. We have had a number of meetings with the designers of the bridge and after our last meeting on February 16, 1956, we wrote a letter to Mr. J. N. Robertson, Director of Highways, District of Columbia, from which I would like to quote, in part, as follows:

> "The making of a beautiful bridge structure stretching above the water from bank to bank is the easiest and most feasible part of this problem, even though it will be achieved at the cost of bisecting a serene river landscape of unique and monumental appeal. Our studies of the problem of the approaches, up to this time, have convinced us that your cooperation and our own efforts can scarcely result in anything but an alleviation of a situation that will long be regretted. The compromise solutions, involving constricted approaches on both sides of the river, serve only to emphasize our convictions that there is too little land available in this area for a traffic artery. Such a bridge and its proposed approaches will irreparably damage the parkland and grassy slopes of the area surrounding the great memorials on both sides of the river. The members of the Commission fully appreciate the beauty which a fine bridge and well-designed approaches can create in suitable surroundings, but it is their considered opinion that the most we can hope for here is a twisted complex of approaches to the bridge, on both sides of the river that will scar and mutilate this monumental river landscape, which is so important to the city of Washington."

I hope the Committee will take these matters into consideration in any action they may take with reference to a bridge in the Lincoln Memorial Area.

FILED
THIS
MAY 28 1956
NOTED

May 22,1956

Dear General Lane:

I was very glad to have a talk with you on the telephone last week and to have an opportunity of expressing the concern which the members of the Commission of Fine Arts feel with reference to the plans for replacing the monumental lighting standards in the central area of the city with highway-type mercury-vapor lighting standards.

On several occasions, both verbally and in writing, we have expressed our views on this subject to Mr. J. M. Robertson, District Director of Highways, and to Mr. H. A. Friede, District Electrical Engineer. We have, as you know, inspected the various types of standards that were temporarily erected on Fourteenth Street in the vicinity of the Great Plaza. At the request of Mr. Friede, at a meeting on February 16, 1956, the members of the Commission expressed a preference for a sketch of a highway-type lighting standard with a right-angle bracket, which Mr. Friede had prepared as a result of his previous discussions with us. It was never our intention, however, to imply that we approved the use of standards of this design, or with curved bracket, for any part of the city other than outlying areas such as Alaska Avenue, for example.

We were very happy to see the removal of the sample standards that had been set up in the vicinity of the National Gallery of Art on Constitution Avenue; but the members of the Commission, at our last meeting, were very much concerned to see that the old standards had been removed and had been replaced by a new set of standards of the curved-bracket highway-type on 17th and 18th Streets between C and D Streets, Northwest. We noted, also, that these standards, which we find unacceptable, now face the Ellipse, the Pan American Union, the east facade of the Interior Department, and the National Headquarters of the American Red Cross. These standards are in the heart of the monumental area where so many government buildings are placed and are seen by many visitors to Washington.

EXHIBIT B

The present lighting standards were developed after long study and with the advice of eminent and talented designers and architects, such as Henry Bacon, the architect of the Lincoln Memorial. It is a unified and dignified scheme of lighting, providing a design that is well suited to this city. If a greater intensity of light is needed, I am sure the lighting engineers will be able to find a way to increase the intensity without changing the design of the standards which have been developed so successfully for this city.

The Commission asked me to say that they could not approve the use of the new type of lighting standard, except for the outlying areas of the city. We hope that you will use your efforts to prevent further changes in these standards, and would appreciate it if the former standards were replaced in the monumental areas above mentioned. We would be glad to confer with you about this matter, if you would like to do so, at the next meeting of the Commission which will be held on June 14th.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Brig. Gen. Thomas A. Lane
Engineer Commissioner of
the District of Columbia
District Building
Washington 4, D. C.

DOMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

The Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, The Commission of Fine Arts, and Miss Katharine N. Rhoades, or Mrs. Eugene Meyer, as provided in Paragraph 4 of the Codicil to the Will of the late Charles L. Freer, have examined the following objects:

1 Glass lustre bowl; Egyptian, 10-11th century; fish and bird design;

1 Manuscript, historical; Persian, ca. A.D. 1300; with miniatures;

1 Painting, landscape; Chinese, by Shen Chou, dated in correspondence with A.D. 1491;

1 Painting; Chinese, by Ni Yüan-lu;

3 Paintings, landscapes; Japanese, attributed to Motonobu;

1 Pottery vase, green; Chinese, Ming dynasty;

1 Pottery bowl, brown and black; Chinese, Temmoku; inscription reads: "May your longevity be as the mountains and your happiness as the sea."

RECEIVED
THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
WASHINGTON D. C.
APR 4 '56

EXHIBIT C

DATED: _____

DATA FORMING BASIS FOR PROPOSED 1956 - 1962 BUILDING PROGRAMS AS OF JANUARY 1, 1956

Employees of Executive Branch of Government housed in all types of space in Metropolitan Washington	178,800
Employees of Executive Branch of Government housed in permanent buildings in Metropolitan Washington	-113,000
Employees of Executive Branch of Government housed in temporary, non-conforming and leased buildings	65,800

The above figures are as of January 1956 and do not allow for anticipated expansion

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION (BY STAGES)	STAGE 1 1956-59	STAGE 2 1960-62	STAGE 3 Subsequent to 1962	
1. Atomic Energy Commission	1220			
2. Central Intelligence Agency	-			
3. State Department Extension	6800			
4. Museum of History and Technology	-			
5. F.O.B. 5((10th Street Mall)	3350			
6. F.O.B. 6 (West of H.E.W.)	2900			
7. F.O.B. 7 (17th and Pa. Ave., N.W.)	3250			
8. F.O.B. 8 (2nd, 3rd and D Sts., S.W.)	740			
9. F.O.B. 9 (West of Interior)	2480			
10. F.O.B. 10 (Indep. Ave., 6th, 9th)	5350			
11. Geological Survey	2730			
12. Nat'l Meteorological Center and Coast and Geodetic Survey	2920			
13. Bureau of Standards	3000			
14. Treasury Annex Extension		1000		
15. Post Office Building Extension		2200		
16. Internal Revenue Extension		1100		
17. Conversion & Extension of Emergency Hospital			2000	
18. Federal Office Building - Walker-Johnson Site			1000	
19. Agriculture Annex Extension			1000	
20. General Accounting Office Extension			1100	
21. H.O.L.C. Extension			1400	
22. Atomic Energy Commission Extension			100	
	41,740	4300	6600	52,640
TOTAL EMPLOYEES REMAINING TO BE HOUSED IN PERMANENT OR LEASED SPACE	24,060	19,760	13,160	13,160

Note 1. All projects in Stage 1, except project No. 12, Nat'l Meteorological Center and Coast and Geodetic Survey, have been approved. Approvals of projects Nos. 7 and 11 are conditional. Projects Nos. 5 through 11, inclusive, have been approved under Public Law 519, 83rd Congress - 2nd Session (Lease Purchase). The remainder in Stage 1 will be financed through direct appropriations.

Note 2. Projects Nos. 1, 2, 11, 12, and 13 are not shown in the aerial photograph.

FIRST STAGE
NEW BUILDINGS TO BE CONSTRUCTED
TEMPORARY & NONCONFORMING BUILDINGS TO BE REMOVED

SECOND STAGE
NEW BUILDINGS TO BE CONSTRUCTED
TEMPORARY & NONCONFORMING BUILDINGS TO BE REMOVED

THIRD STAGE
NEW BUILDINGS TO BE CONSTRUCTED

STAGE BY STAGE

STAGE 1. 1956-59

Completion of the thirteen projects in this stage will provide quarters in permanent Government buildings for nearly two-thirds of the employees now in temporary, nonconforming, and leased space. This will permit the demolition of nearly two-thirds of the temporary buildings.

Five of the projects will be financed by direct appropriations. These are buildings for the Atomic Energy Commission, Central Intelligence Agency, Department of State, the National Bureau of Standards and the Museum of History and Technology of the Smithsonian Institution. Congress has appropriated funds to start these projects.

The remaining eight are to be financed by private funds under the Public Buildings Purchase Contract Act of 1954, the so-called lease-purchase legislation.

STAGE 2. 1960-62

This stage consists of three projects in the heart of the downtown area. Two of the three — the extensions of the Internal Revenue and Post Office Buildings — will close existing gaps in the development of the Federal Triangle along Pennsylvania Avenue.

The construction in this stage would provide housing for 4,300 employees, about 6.5 percent of those presently in temporary, nonconforming, and leased space. The completion of this stage, moreover, would permit the demolition of the remaining temporary buildings in the downtown area.

STAGE 3. POST - 1962

The final six projects which form this stage would add permanent housing for 6,600 employees.

Four of the six would extend existing buildings. The other two projects would provide new office buildings, by converting and extending Emergency Hospital on New York Avenue between 17th and 18th Streets, N. W., and by constructing a building on the Walker Johnson site on 18th Street between New York Avenue and E Streets, N.W. Emergency along with Garfield and Episcopal Eye, Ear and Throat Hospitals, will be transferred to the Federal Government when these hospitals have occupied the new District of Columbia Hospital Center now under construction for their use on the grounds of the Soldiers' Home.

A DECADE OF CONSTRUCTION

Not since the first days of the Republic, when the Federal City became a reality, has the Government so badly needed new buildings in Washington, D. C. This plan, a simple, direct solution to a massive problem complicated by many challenging aspects, is designed to satisfy these requirements within the next decade.

A few of the factors which necessarily entered into consideration are:

Temporary office buildings, in some instances dating from World War I, were becoming permanent, unsightly landmarks.

Earlier construction programs which brightened the luster of Washington's fame as one of the world's beautiful capitals are marred by noticeable gaps.

The Government's desire to participate in the redevelopment of the city's Southwest quadrant.

Economic and traffic problems, stemming from raising and lowering the density of the downtown working population, had to be carefully weighed.

And, above all, account had to be taken of costs and financing to avoid a burdensome addition to the Federal debt.

So the problem was more than one of merely inventorying needs and prescribing permanent buildings which would neatly balance them. The task had for its target a balanced, long-range, master program which would, on one hand, avoid the pitfalls of piecemeal construction and, on the other, serve as a successor to the plans of the past.

In carrying out this task, General Services Administration has provided for the substantial completion of the 1950 comprehensive plan of the National Capital Planning Commission for the area west of the Capitol. There are many other significant features of the construction program. All the downtown tempos, for instance, are scheduled to go by 1962, thereby restoring about 125 acres of park land, and the plan by placing four projects with seven buildings in the Southwest, will aid materially in the area's redevelopment.

Primarily the plan answers the Government's immediate urgent requirements with due regard to traffic, economic and security factors. Nevertheless, it is so flexible in timing and scope that its completion may be accelerated and its size enlarged. It cannot, of course, provide for all future requirements. But as it stands today it meets Federal needs and therefore it should achieve its main underlying purpose of aiding the Government in successfully fulfilling its worldwide responsibilities to the Nation.

August 1956
(Revised)

F. Moran McConihe
Commissioner of Public Buildings
General Services Administration

CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM
FEDERAL BUILDINGS

WASHINGTON, D.C. AND VICINITY

1956 - 1966

This report sets forth a plan for meeting major immediate requirements of the Executive Branch of the Government for permanent buildings in Washington, D. C., and vicinity. It was prepared at the request of the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Buildings and Grounds of the Committee on Public Works of the House of Representatives on July 8, 1955.

The plan is designed to accomplish the interrelated goal of demolishing the remaining temporary office buildings of World Wars I and II on the Mall and nearby areas in downtown Washington.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE WASHINGTON, D. C.

EXHIBIT D

25 May 1956

Mr. L. L. Hunter
Supervising Architect
Public Buildings Service
General Services Administration
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hunter:

At a meeting held on 5 April 1956, the Commission of Fine Arts were pleased to have you, Mr. Fred S. Poorman, Deputy Commissioner of Public Buildings, and Mr. William N. Denton, Jr., architect, of the firm of Wilson and Denton, contract-architects, present the plans for the Girls Dormitory at Gallaudet College, Washington, D. C.

The plans were approved as presented.

Sincerely yours,

L. R. Wilson
Secretary

EXHIBIT E